

EXHIBIT

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Some Michigan Head Start programs face delays - again - in federal funding

Michigan Public | By [Rachel Mintz](#)

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Backs of schoolkids with colorful rucksacks moving in the street

Over the past week, Head Start programs in Michigan are [once again](#) seeing delays in federal funding as they try to meet payroll and cover day-to-day operations.

MaDonna Princer is worried. The executive director of Head Start in Kent County said these programs offer more than just free preschool to low-income families. They provide opportunities for working or student parents, and they create a positive ripple effect in the community, she said. When the money doesn't come in on time — “It's not as simple as just saying that, you know, children don't get to come to preschool,” Princer told Michigan Public. “That's far too simplified of the impact of this.”

could pay their bills in the interim. While that funding pause order was [rescinded](#) two days later, the Trump administration's Office of Management and Budget vowed to continue the review of federal spending.

Now, nearly four months later, the nonprofit educational programs are again facing issues with the federal funding they regularly receive. Head Start centers across the country have also been receiving [significantly less](#) federal funding in 2025 compared to this time last year.

Head Start programs rely on a payment management system in which the federal government deposits part of the total annual grant. Then, Head Start programs request to use up to three business days of funding at a time. Those funds are then directly deposited into Head Start programs' bank accounts before being distributed for things like payroll.

Princer said her program's funding requests are usually approved and then deposited into the Head Start for Kent County's bank account within a 24-hour turnaround.

"I've been doing this for 26 years," Princer said. "Until January, that is how it's worked."

Now, Princer doesn't see that same fast turnaround.

"Last week, there was a pause in the money coming through. It was just a one-day delay," Princer said. "Now this week I'm again experiencing that, and it's now been two days, and it is my payroll that is due. My staff are to be paid tomorrow."

Robin J. Bozek, executive director at the Michigan Head Start Association, said there has been unsteady funding for Michigan Head Start programs since the closure of Michigan's regional Office of Head Start in Chicago on April 1.

Bozek also said some Head Start programs requesting their usual operational funding have been met with a notice from the federal Department of Government Efficiency — the department led by billionaire Elon Musk who has been laying off thousands of federal employees — asking for further information.

"[DOGE] asked them for further information than what they've already provided, which is the normal information," Bozek said. "And then in turn, when [Head Start programs] do

that, they are still notified that they have to either do something or not receiv[e] the funds.”

Regional office closures

Five regional offices for the Office of Head Start [were closed](#) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on April 1. Michigan Head Start programs usually look to the regional office in Chicago for support and guidance, but it's been closed.

The National Head Start Association expressed concern over the closure of the offices, but said it will continue working with the Trump administration and Congress to keep Head Start programs going.

“Closing these regional Head Start offices could create delays in essential program support and weaken the system that has successfully served millions of children for decades,” the association wrote in an [April 1 statement](#).

Princer said that Kent County’s Head Start program had been working on projects with the regional office prior to its closure, and that those projects are now in limbo. Those projects include requesting teacher waivers, which permit Head Start for Kent County to hire a teacher who is still in the process of receiving their teaching degree but is near graduation.

“When we have an opening for a teacher that comes in the early springtime, it's often difficult to find a qualified teacher,” Princer said. “So per regulations, we can hire somebody who is within a certain timeframe of graduating, offer them the job, and it's kind of like a contingency.”

Princer said she doesn’t know who to communicate with about that request now.

Uncertainty for the rest of the school year - and the future of Head Start

Some Head Start programs in Michigan have [not yet seen](#) the total amount of their 2025 grant deposited into the payment management system. That’s normal, though, says Princer, as the rest of the grant is usually deposited in April each year. Head Start program funding works under a continuing resolution budget.

Princer said what's not normal is that the 2025 year grant has been finalized and passed in March, along with the rest of the federal spending budget, but the grant funding isn't available on the payment management system yet.

"If they don't update that by mid-May, there won't show any more of my grant funds in the payment management system for me to access, even though I have been awarded a full grant year for 2025," Princer said.

Bozek said Head Start programs are not set up to endure delays in funding, and that possible closures would mean that families wouldn't have any place to send their children when they go to work.

"The impact isn't only about early learning and children and all of their comprehensive services," Bozek said. "It's also about the community and then the economic impact in our state of this huge job loss."

Bozek said that Head Start programs serve 27,656 children in Michigan, and employ 8,622 people.

Meanwhile, there's even more worrisome news for Head Start directors, teachers, and parents with children in the programs.

The Washington Post reported on April 16 that it had [obtained](#) a preliminary budget document from the White House, in which the Trump administration seeks to cut about one-third of discretionary spending by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The internal document said the administration seeks to eliminate funding for Head Start.

Yasmina Vinci, executive director of NHSA, issued this statement the next day:

"This proposal does not reflect fiscal responsibility — it reflects a disinvestment in our future. Eliminating funding for Head Start would be catastrophic. It would be a direct attack on our nation's most at-risk children, their well-being, and their families. It would end early learning, meals, vision, hearing, developmental screenings, and dental care for nearly 800,000 children.

Communities nationwide would lose a vital foundation of their child and family support

choose between their livelihoods and a safe, reliable place for their children to grow and start on the pathway to success."

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